

## SECTION 2

## READING PASSAGE 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on Question 14-26 which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

**Can we call it "ART"****Life-Casting and Art****A**

When these life-castings were made in the 19th century, no one thought of them as art. But, if critics today can hail Tracey Emin's unmade bed and the lights going off and on in a gallery as masterpieces of some kind, then shouldn't these more skillful and profoundly strange works have a greater claim on our attention?

**B**

Art changes over time; what is art changes, too. Objects intended for devotional, ritualistic or recreational use are re-categorised, by latecomers from another civilisation who no longer respond to these original purposes. Where would New Yorker cartooning be without Lascaux gags in which one bison-painter makes anachronistically "artistic" remarks to another? What also happens is that techniques and crafts judged non-artistic at the time are reassessed.

**C**

In the 19th century, life-casting was to sculpture what photography was to painting; and both were viewed as cheating short-cuts by the senior arts. Their virtues – of speed and unwavering realism – also implied their limitations; they left little or no room for the imagination. For many, life-casting was an insult to the sculptor's creative gesture; in a famous lawsuit of 1834, a moulder whose mask of the dying Napoleon had been reproduced and sold without his permission, was judged to have no rights in the image – in other words, he was specifically held not to be an artist. Rodin said of life-casting: "It happens fast, but it doesn't make art." Others feared that the whole canon of aesthetics might be blown off course if too much nature was allowed in, it would lead art away from its proper pursuit of the ideal.

**D**

Gauguin, at the end of the century, worried about future developments in photography: if ever the process went into colour, what painter would labour away at a likeness with a brush made from squirrel-tail? But painting has proved robust. Photography changed it, of course, just as the novel had to reassess narrative after the arrival of the cinema. But the gap between the senior and junior arts was always narrower than the die-hards implied: painters have always used technical back-up – studio assistants to do the boring bits, cameras lucida and obscura; while apparently lesser crafts involve great skill, thought, preparation, choice, and – depending how we define it – imagination. Life-casting was complex, technical work, as Benjamin Robert Haydon discovered when he poured 250 litres of plaster over his black model Wilson and nearly killed him.

**E**

Time changes our view in another way, too. Each new art movement implies a reassessment of what has gone before; what is done now alters what was done before. In some cases, this is merely self-serving, with the new art using the old to justify itself: Look how all of that points to this; aren't we clever to be the culmination of all that has gone before? But usually it is a matter of re-alerting the sensibility, reminding us not to take things for granted; every so often we need the aesthetic equivalent of a cataract operation. So there are many items in this show – innocent bit-players back in the last half of the 19th century – which would sit happily nowadays in a commercial or public gallery. Many curators would probably put in for the stunning cast of the hand of a giant from Barnum's circus.

**F**

The initial impact is on the eye, in the contradiction (which Mueck constantly exploits) between unexpected size and extreme verisimilitude. Next, the human element kicks in: you note that the nails are dirt-encrusted – unless this is the caster's decorative addition – and the paddy fingertips extend far beyond them. (Was the giant an anxious gnawer, or does giantism mean that the flesh simply outgrows the nails?) Then you take in the element of choice, arrangement, art if you like – the neat, pleated, buttoned sleeve end that gives the item balance and variation of texture. This is just a moulded hand, yet the part stands utterly for the whole: and, as an item on public display, it reminds us, slyly, poignantly, of the full-size original who in his time was just as much a victim of gawping. We are not a long way from Degas's *La Petite Danseuse* (which, after all, one critic said should be in the Dupuytren pathology museum); though we are nearer to contemporary art that lazily gets called cutting-edge.

**G**



Barthes proclaimed the death of the author, the liberation of the text from authorial intension, and the consequent empowerment of the reader; he announced this, needless to say, in a text written with a particular intention in order to communicate something very specific to a reader. An own goal of Keith Weller proportions. But what doesn't work for literature works much better for art. Pictures do float free of their creators' intentions; over time, the "reader" does become more powerful. Few of us can look at a medieval altarpiece as its painter "intended", we believe too little and aesthetically know too much, so we recreate, we find new fields of pleasure in the work. Equally, the lack of artistic intention of Paul Richer and other forgotten craftsmen who brushed oil on to flesh, who moulded, cast, decorated and primped a century and more ago is now irrelevant.

## H

What counts is the surviving object and our living response to it. The tests are simple: does it interest the eye, excite the brain, move the mind to reflection, and involve the heart; further, is an apparent level of skill involved? Much currently fashionable art bothers only the eye and briefly the brain; but it fails to engage the mind or the heart. It may, to use the old dichotomy, be beautiful, but it is rarely true to any significant depth. One of the constant pleasures of art is its ability to come at us from an unexpected angle and stop us short in wonder. That is what many of the objects in this show do. The Ataxic Venus doesn't make Ron Mueck's Dead Dad any less intense and moving an image; but she does offer herself as a companion, precursor, and, yes, rival.

## Questions 14-18

The Reading Passage has seven paragraphs **A-H**

Which paragraph contains the following information?

*Write the correct letter **A-H**, in boxes **14-18** on your answer sheet.*

- 14** Technicians do the boring work
- 15** A trial on a famous figure's mask in 19th century
- 16** Intention from author is claimed matters in Art
- 17** How to assess an art
- 18** Detailed depiction of an earlier work

**Questions 19-24**

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2?

*In boxes 19-24 on your answer sheet, write*

- YES**            if the statement is true  
**NO**            if the statement is false  
**NOT GIVEN**   if the information is not given in the passage

- 19** The intension of using artistic objects will change as time pass.  
**20** In 19th century, people appreciate the fast speed and realism of living casting.  
**21** Rodin indicated that slow pace would improve the artistic quality of casting.  
**22** The importance of painting dropped as the development of photographs.  
**23** Life casting requires less skill and cost than painting.  
**24** Emerge of new art makes people recognise the meaning of art again.

**Questions 25-26**

Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.

*Write your answers in boxes 25-26 on your answer sheet.*

- 25** Why ***hand of giant*** from Barnum's circus attract people's attention in the first place?
- A** details and human element  
**B** size and realism  
**C** texture and color  
**D** imagination and intuition

- 26 What requirement does it depend on when judging if an object is "art"?
- A audience status
  - B fresh or old condition
  - C lasting period
  - D public response